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In speaking of illicit

intercourse with another man's wife, they use the expression *gun amot*, which is fairly translatable by 'steal' and is applied also to acts of theft in the ordinary sense in which we use that term. It is, of course, dangerous to rely too much on linguistic evidence, but it is noteworthy that to 'steal' a man's wife and to steal his ceremonial currency were once bracketed together, by a man with whom I was discussing the subject of theft, as crimes belonging to the same category, and that in some cases the same penalty has been exacted for both. All the people with whom I discussed the matter in relation to marriage gave me the impression that no distinction existed in their minds between paying for a wife and paying for anything else of importance.

The rules governing the operation of the custom are entirely compatible with this view. If the woman refuses to perform the duties of a wife, her husband can, and does, divorce her and demand his currency back—he is not receiving what he paid for so he repudiates the purchase. But if she has cause to divorce him, he does not get his currency returned to him, the break-down of the transaction was not her fault. If she dies without giving him a child, he will expect to be repaid, unless he receives a sister in her place. Pinari told me that the currency handed over in respect of Riro, the wife of his son Wasɛ, who had died, childless, not very long before my visit, would be returned, except one string, which was to be retained by her relatives 'because her body stays here', the woman having been buried at Kurtatchi. I have not seen a similar custom recorded elsewhere. If her death occurs in child-birth, and the child lives, repayment is made in part only, one string being retained 'for the child'. But if the child dies too, the full amount is usually asked and given. For a wife dying after having borne more than one child, no repayment is expected—the husband has had his money's worth, so to speak.

It does not follow that the woman is regarded as the absolute property of the man to do as he likes with. That is definitely not the case. What seems to me to be the crucial point was put very clearly by a woman, Matɛv, on our way back from witnessing this very transaction, when the matter was naturally the subject of conversation. She said:

'Tab to wem nor a kiki pi mon.'
Thing pay we genitals of women.

i.e. 'What we pay for is the woman's genitals.' That is to say,

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it is not the woman that is bought, but the right to use her body for the satisfaction of the husband and the procreation of children by him. With this the man also acquires the right to be looked after and provided with food properly prepared, and failure on the part of the wife in these respects is regarded as ground for divorce. It is a wife, as distinct from a woman in her capacity as an individual, that is purchased when the strings of ceremonial currency pass from the bridegroom's family to that of the bride. She is not thereby prevented from being a person with rights of her own in the community, for her position in this society is far from being a negligible one, as will be seen from other portions of this book. My impression is that while they definitely regard the handing over of the ceremonial currency as a commercial transaction, it is not in any way detrimental to the dignity of the woman, nor does this point of view react unfavourably on her status in the community.

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SEXES PRIOR TO MARRIAGE

It will be noted that there is no feature in the series of betrothal ceremonies, nor in the final ceremony preceding the consummation of the marriage, involving a test of the girl's virginity. The question was never brought up spontaneously by the natives in our conversations regarding various aspects of sex and marriage, and the lack of response to such guarded inquiries as I made—direct questions being liable to produce misleading results—would seem to indicate that the matter is not considered of primary importance. It is noteworthy, too, that out of several hundred folk-tales and legends in my collection not a single one has any bearing on this point, though practically every other aspect of the sexual life is illustrated therein. Two cases of rape occur in my records, but both were attended by special circumstances. One, complicated by incest, has already been discussed (p. 77). The other (referred to on p. 230) concerned a girl who had attained adult years without being married owing to a deformity. Perhaps the fact that in the past it was only exceptionally that a girl was not claimed by a husband at or before sexual maturity accounts for the absence of stress on the subject. Nowadays, in the more sophisticated villages, where the age of marriage is getting appreciably later, and some freedom of choice as to whether a girl marries or not is just possible, a new situation is arising. In the few such cases known

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though the other villagers are always asking him why he does not do so. He says he does not want to, because he is too sad over the loss of his brother. If another man wanted to marry her, he would be willing. 587

The widow goes to her husband's brother as soon as the final funerary rites have been held (see Chap. XIV). There is no ceremony on such an occasion. She has (so far as I could learn, but it is difficult to be quite sure) little choice in the matter if her late husband's brother really wants her, but otherwise, should she prefer not to marry again, she will probably not be forced to do so. If she is old, she usually goes to live with one or other of her married children, who will support her. In several instances known to me, the woman chose to return to her own village, as Matēv did when her husband Boar of Saposa died. In her case it was clearly to her advantage to do so, since she holds a prominent position at Kurtatchi as sister of the *tsunaun tʃan*, and mother of his heir. Another Saposa man wanted to marry her, but she wished to come home, and her brother Pinari supported her. He told me that if it had been Boar's brother who wanted her he would not have objected, although he was glad to have her and her children at Kurtatchi. 587 768

If the husband's brother takes the widow, he is bound to look after her and her children, if young, or to make provision for them in some other way. Sometimes an arrangement is made with the woman's relatives, who may, and often do, take one or more of the children and bring them up.

If another man wishes to marry her, he gives an agreed amount of ceremonial currency to the deceased husband's brother, and one string to the woman's relatives: not more than one, as my informants were careful to explain to me, because enough had already changed hands on the occasion of her previous marriage. The children usually go with their mother to her new home, and I have never heard of a man refusing to take them. But sometimes one will go to her relatives by mutual agreement.

The custom of marrying the brother's widow is now falling into disuse owing to the discouragement of polygamy by the missionaries. 587 178

DIVORCE

Divorce is frequent and easy. The woman has as much right to demand it as the man, and neither party can deny it to the other. 586

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●586 The procedure is simple. The woman either goes, or is sent, back to her own people, and probably quickly finds another husband. If the husband divorces the wife, he demands the return of the ceremonial currency he gave to her people at the time of the marriage. If the wife divorces the husband, her relatives are under no obligation to return the ceremonial currency, but in practice they sometimes do so—it seems to be a matter of family pride. The children go with the mother. If she marries again, her new husband takes the children also. In many cases with which I am personally acquainted, he looks after them with as much care as if they were his own, and it was only on taking the genealogy of the family in detail that I discovered the actual state of affairs. Sometimes, however, they are cared for by other relatives of the woman, probably her sister.

Reasons for divorce on the part of the husband are as follows (the order is that in which they were given to me):

1. Persistent refusal on the part of the wife to cook his food, or continual slowness and carelessness in doing so.[1]
2. Refusal of sexual intercourse. In one case this was considered sufficient ground even though the reason for the refusal was that the woman considered it was too soon after the birth of their child (see p. 156 for this regulation). In this case, however, the feeling of the village was against the man, and no one else would marry him.
3. Bad skin disease. This will not usually be given as a cause by itself, but additional to some other charge, probably laziness.

[837] 4. Adultery, as a rule only if it results in pregnancy, otherwise it is usually condoned, especially if carried on quietly.

Reasons for divorce on the part of the wife are:

1. Failure of the husband to take his share in the work of providing food for the household.
2. Persistent cruelty and severe beating. (But this seems to be very bad indeed before it is countered by divorce.)
3. Inability to perform the sexual act.

[1] During my residence a dispute arose about the wives of two men of Ieta (on Buka). They had married women from villages within Pinari's sphere of influence, so they appealed to him in the matter. They said that although the ceremonial currency had been handed over in respect of these women, and the marriage rites completed, their wives refused to live with them at Ieta or to cook their food or to look after them, so they demanded the return of their currency. Pinari paid them from his own stock, and said he would recover it from the women's relatives.

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595 been dead for some years. Pinari had nothing to say about these two women.

[586] 5, 6. Esa and Tchinawat. Both these women were divorced by Pinari shortly after marriage because they did not get on with his chief wife Rusu. Pinari said he told them: 'If you are not cross you can stay, if you are cross you can go back to your own home, I don't like you any more.' Eventually his brother Boie married both of them; when he died they went back to their own village. Both are now dead.

[588] 7. Gomar. Was married as a child to Sarumpots, the son of Pinari's mother by another husband. He was eaten by a shark before she had had any children by him. This marriage was highly irregular (it is discussed on p. 76), but having taken place, Pinari's succession to her as his brother's widow was quite in order. She is now Pinari's chief wife, [832] since the death of Rusu. Pinari liked her, and made magic to gain her love.[1] They seem to get on very well together, though she now takes second place in his regard, I think, to Kwimau. Her first child died when a few days old. The second is now in her early twenties. Then she lost four in infancy, and has now an infant about a year old.

[588] 8. Kwimau, whom he married after nos. 5 and 6 had been divorced. This marriage was also irregular, since she is Pinari's mother's brother's daughter (*pi'an*), usually a forbidden relationship (see Chap. II). Pinari says they liked each other so much that he had to take her. She is markedly his favourite; he usually occupies her hut, shows her great deference, and chooses her as his companion on various occasions. She has two sons by him, both still quite little.

9. Kumun. A commoner belonging to this village. She married a man belonging to a village about ten miles off, and lived there till he died. Then she came back to live with her grandfather at Kurtatchi, and Pinari took a fancy to her and 'bought' her from him. She has had three children by her first husband and one by Pinari, but all are dead. [837] She has a reputation for carrying on intrigues with other men, and after one of the villagers was found in her hut, Pinari took her away to live at the taro garden for a long time. When I left she was pregnant. Pinari declared the child was not his, but she refused to admit that any one else was responsible for it. Pinari was very angry about it, but it seemed to me to be more because his dignity was outraged by the fact that some one had dared to interfere with his—the *tsunaun*'s—wife, in his own hut, than because he cared much for Kumun. She is, I think, very highly sexed, and was much freer with speech and gesture in public than most of the women. She is known to make assignations for other women with their lovers.

10. Kamits. Had been the wife of a man named Soli, by whom she

[1] The magic he used is recorded on p. 121.

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had two children. Pinari married her after Soli's death, and took one child. The other is being looked after by Soli's people at the village of Ruri. No children by Pinari.

11. Sang. Widow of Boie, son of Pinari's mother by another husband. At Boie's death Pinari took her according to custom. She has one child, whom Pinari also took. Pinari said she had no children by him 'yet'. She was still wearing her hair in the fashion of widows when I came to the village, but cut it while I was there. I think Boie had been dead for about a year.

At the time of my visit, Pinari was negotiating for a girl at the village of Ieta, on Buka, from which his first wife came. He had been over several times to try to get her, but she did not want him and always ran away into the bush. Her family were in favour of the match, so he probably got her in the end, but they were not forcing her. One night a storm blew down a large tree in the near neighbourhood of the village, blocking the road to it. Pinari told me that he was sure it was caused by magic made by Gomar to spite him, because she was angry that he wished to take another wife.

While he quite clearly prefers Kwimau to any of the others, Pinari pays quite a lot of attention to all his wives, and to their children, whether they are his own or belong to a former husband. He is generous with tobacco, and when he goes to a plantation to sell copra he often brings them some little present from the store.

As a further example of the marriages that take place among these people, I give the history of Sobak, who is a commoner.

Marital history of Sobak

1. Sobak's first wife was Sieli, to whom he was betrothed when both were young. They had no children for some time, then there was a son, who is now about ten. Sieli has been dead for some years.

2. His second was Niwuts, whom he married when he was older but she quite a child. He divorced her 'because she had a sore' (probably a tropical ulcer, these being frequent and often very bad in this region). He told me that he said to her: 'You go back to your own village, I don't want to be married to you.' There were no children. She now lives alone at Gowē, a village farther down the coast. She has not remarried.

3. His third, with whom he lives at present, is Tsonakets, who was previously divorced from Takoi of Hanahan (a village on the east coast of Buka), for what reason I do not know. Takoi told Sobak he could have her if he liked. Sobak consulted Pinari, who approved, and had her brought over to Kurtatchi. She has a son, now in his teens, whom

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837 The more usual procedure, nowadays, however, is that the
● 586 husband divorces the woman, who then marries her lover. Several
such cases were personally known to me. The following is typical:
848 Tahol was married to Tsigot, a man much older than herself, and
while he was absent from the village Wasē became her lover. She
became pregnant; her husband was very angry when he discovered
it, but did not divorce her. The child died. Tsigot went to Rabaul
to work as an indentured labourer, Wasē and Tahol became lovers
again and had another child. This time Tsigot divorced Tahol,
and Wasē married her as his third wife. As far as I can judge they
are living very happily together. His first wife has died, and his
second is still an immature child, though she lives in his hut. He
[855] seems to be really fond of Tahol, and both adore the baby, now
nearly two years old, who gets even more petting than Melanesian
children usually do.

837 No stigma of any sort attaches to the child of such a union,
848 whether the parents marry or not, and none to the woman if her
lover marries her. In most of the instances that came under my
observation, marriage had taken place after the woman's divorce.
These marriages seem to be among the happiest that I met with,
which is, perhaps, only to be expected, since they are almost the
only ones in this society which can fairly be said to be the result of
individual preference on both sides. But many, perhaps the
majority, of the clandestine affairs are not taken seriously by either
partner, and are clearly entered into for no other reason than the
[195] gratification of physical desire. The word used for them, *riuk*, is
translatable as 'play'; it is the same word as is used for the play of
a child. and was also applied to the antics of my kitten.

WOMEN'S PART IN INTRIGUES

837 Mrs. Hadden, who was one of the first white people to live in
this part of the country, and who has always been interested in the
natives, told me she was certain that the woman was, more often
than not, the more active, if not the instigating partner in love
affairs. A similar view was expressed, quite independently, by one
of the priests, who had worked in the district for many years.
Direct evidence is difficult to obtain, but there is reason to think
837 that this is true. It is strongly suggested in the folk-tales, which
538 do, I am sure, reflect actual conditions. There is, for example,
a frequently recurring incident of a woman who pretended to be

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IV

PREGNANCY AND CHILD-BIRTH

KNOWLEDGE OF PATERNITY

842 IT will be evident from what has been said in the preceding chapter concerning the attitude of these natives to extra-marital intercourse when it results in pregnancy, that they are aware of the connexion between copulation and conception. They say, of the man, *wataputs bai'i*, which may be translated 'he makes the child come up', *wataputs* being also used in the sense of 'to go and fetch', and *taputs* without the causative prefix *wa-* meaning 'to come at a person's call'. Of the woman, it is said *mon to giug non*, 'the woman is pregnant'. The same terms are applied to animals. There is abundant evidence of their knowledge in their conversations and in their tales. One of these, for example, deals with a
842 woman whose husband was impotent. She begs him to let her go,
837 so that she can marry a man by whom she can have a child. He
848 refuses, and she takes a lover in the bush, by whom she becomes pregnant. Her husband says: 'Who has made you pregnant?' I
586 know the child is not mine, because I cannot have coitus with you.' When the child is born the husband kills it, and the woman divorces him and marries her lover.

842 Their knowledge, however, does not seem to go beyond the necessity for copulation. The child is thought to be formed out of the woman's blood. This idea may possibly have been suggested by the cessation of the menses during pregnancy since this causal relationship is recognized by them. On the part of the man, pene-
[831] tration is thought to be the essential factor. The seminal fluid is looked upon as water, and there is complete ignorance as to the function of the testicles. Village gossip has it that there was a man—now dead—in a neighbouring village whose penis was destroyed by a sore. He made an artificial one of wood, by means of which he copulated with his wife, who produced offspring. The name of one of his sons still living was adduced as proof of the truth of the story, the obvious explanation apparently not being applied to this case. There are other indications of the

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for granted, so much so that most informants could give no explanation of it at all. It is considered to be the individual's private concern, no strong public feeling being involved. Although most people will say it is a good thing to have children, it is apparently not anti-social to abstain from doing so. A woman who desires children in vain is pitied, and those who know of remedies for her condition will offer them, but no stigma rests upon a barren woman. It is noteworthy in this connexion that sterility is not included among the causes of divorce (see p. 110). A man who wants children can take another wife, the woman is still useful to him if she works hard and looks after him well. A childless marriage seems to be regarded as unfortunate but not morally reprehensible, while intrigues are condoned unless they result in pregnancy. Religious motives for rearing a family are lacking, since the *urar* (spirits of the dead) are not worshipped by their descendants. Attention is paid to them when it is desired to obtain their help or to ward off their anger, but this is not necessarily the concern of their direct descendants. There are thus no powerful sanctions, social, moral, or religious, to counter the urge, be it grief, expediency, or any other motive, leading a woman to take steps whereby she believes herself to be rendered permanently incapable of bearing children.

MEDICINES FACILITATING CONCEPTION

When a woman who wants a child fails to become pregnant, she may have recourse to several 'medicines' thought to facilitate conception, among which are the following:

Sip (*Euphorbia hirta*).

Take a number of plants, pick off the tiny flowers (which grow in bunches close to the stalk), and push them into a hole made in a cooked taro. The woman must eat the taro, and will then be able to conceive, even if she has previously taken one of the contraceptive medicines.

Euphorbia hirta, the 'asthma herb', is used in Australia in certain pulmonary complaints (Maiden, 1889, p. 183), and there is an account in a Dutch medical work dated 1658 of its efficacy as an antidote to snake-bite, in which it is stated that 'a pinch of the dried powder, taken in some convenient menstruum, excites the heart and arouses the vital forces depressed by the poison'. Dr. Marsset of Paris, who made a study of the plant in 1885, says it seems to

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relations with other women, and since many men have more than one wife, and in any case opportunities for extra-marital intercourse are not lacking, this custom, of such obvious benefit to the mother, does not impose continence upon the male. But the decline in polygamy now conduces to an increasing disregard of this rule.

Failing to observe the taboo is supposed to bring ill-health to the child. An obviously sickly baby will be taken as an indication that its parents have been indulging in sexual intercourse during the prohibited period. Some do so in secret, and give the child a concoction of leaves to drink which is supposed to counteract the ill effects of the act. But in general, the women strongly resent any attempt on the part of their husbands to approach them during this prohibited period. A case occurred at Kurtatchi, some time before my arrival, of a man who divorced his wife for refusing him access at a time she considered too soon after the birth of their child. The sentiment of the village was against him, and he never succeeded in obtaining another wife. The following story from my collection also illustrates this point. It was told me as typical of what used to happen in the olden days:

There was a man whose wife had a child. The man asked his wife to go to the bush with him. The woman said: 'No, I don't want to.' The man said: 'Now come, you and I will have coitus in the bush.' The woman said: 'No, I don't want to, I am thinking of the child. I don't want the child to be hurt.' The man pressed her. He said: 'The child is not little, he is a big child now.' The woman said: 'No, I don't want people to laugh at me because my child is sickly.' The man was angry, he went alone to the bush, he climbed a *tsiniv* tree (tall slender tree from the trunk of which dug-out canoes are made). He jumped down head-first, he fell to the ground, and his neck was broken and he died. The woman went to look for her husband, she found him dead. She wailed, and said: 'Alas for my husband, he has killed himself. By and by I shall get another husband.'

It used to be looked upon as so impossible that the taboo on sexual intercourse should be broken, that if a woman became pregnant again during the prohibited period it was said that she had taken a banana and 'made the child come up' with it. 'Face-saving' seems to be popular with the Melanesian, but the method is interesting because of the belief, referred in an earlier part of this chapter, that penetration by means of a banana can cause pregnancy.